

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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SUBJ: SICILIAN MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

REF: ROME 5711

1. ELECTIONS WERE HELD JUNE 24-25 IN THIRTEEN SICILIAN TOWNS HAVING POPULATIONS LARGER THAN 5,000, VOTING UNDER THE PROPORTIONAL SYSTEM. OVER 75,000 VOTES, TOTAL, WERE CAST. THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS AT 38.7 PERCENT GAINED 1.9 PERCENT AND 0.5 PERCENT OVER THE PARTY'S SHOWINGS IN THE PRECEDING MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS AND IN THE 1972 PARLIAMENTARY RACE IN THE SAME LOCALITIES. A SIMILAR COMPARISON OF CURRENT AND PAST RESULTS SHOW THE REPUBLICANS AT 3.1 PERCENT, UP 2.2 PERCENT AND 0.7 PERCENT RESPECTIVELY. THE SOCIALISTS POLLED 17.6 PERCENT IN CONTRAST WITH ONLY 11.9 PERCENT IN 1972, WHILE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS ROSE TO 4.7 PERCENT ON THIS OCCASION FROM 2.7 PERCENT IN 1972. (IN PREVIOUS COMMUNAL ELECTIONS THESE TWO PARTIES RUNNING JOINTLY POLLED 14.6 PERCENT.) THE LIBERALS CONTINUED TO DECLINE, DROPPING FROM 1.4 PERCENT IN THE LAST MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS AND 1.1 PERCENT IN LAST YEAR'S PARLIAMENTARY RACE TO A CURRENT LOW OF 0.7 PERCENT.

2. THE COMMUNISTS, AT 21.9 PERCENT, WERE 4.3 PERCENT OFF THEIR STANDING IN LAST YEAR'S PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION ALTHOUGH THE PARTY REGISTERED A SLIGHT GAIN, 0.7 PERCENT, OVER ITS LAST MUNICIPAL
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SHOWING. CONDITIONING THE LATTER RESULT IS THE FACT THAT THE PCI FAILED TO ATTRACT ANY SIGNIFICANT PART OF THE 3.6 PERCENT PARLIAMENTARY AND 2.4 PERCENT LOCAL VOTES POLLED PREVIOUSLY BY THE PROLETARIAN SOCIALIST PARTY (PSIUP) WHICH MERGED WITH THE COMMUNISTS IN 1972. THUS THE TOTAL FAR- LEFT (PCI AND PSIUP) VOTE DROPPED FROM 28.6 PERCENT IN THE 1972 PARLIAMENTARY VOTE AND 25.8 PERCENT IN THE LATEST MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS TO A CURRENT LEVEL OF 21.9 PERCENT.

3. THE FAR- RIGHT MSI, AT 9.9 PERCENT, ALSO DROPPED SUBSTANTIALLY FROM ITS 1972 PARLIAMENTARY PERFORMANCE OF 13.6 PERCENT AND ITS LAST MUNICIPAL ELECTION SHOWING OF 12.7 PERCENT. MSI LOSSES TAKE ON ADDED SIGNIFICANCE GIVEN THE FAR- FITH' S RECENT STRONG SHOWING IN SICILY AND PARTICULARLY IN CATANIA PROVINCE WHERE FIVE OF THE 13 TOWNS WHICH VOTED OVER THE PAST WEEKEND ARE LOCATED.

4. COMMENT: THE SICILIAN VOTE WAS THE LAST F THREE OFF- TERM ELECTIONS TO BE HELD IN FIRST HALF OF 1973. LIKE THE VOTE ONE WEEK EARLIER IN FRIULI- VENEZIA GIULIA (REFTTEL), THE SICILIAN RESULTS CONFIRM AN UPSWING FOR THE SOCIALIST PARTY. WHILE IT IS ALWAYS HAZARDOUS TO DRAW NATIONAL MEANING FROM A SMALL SAMPLING OF LOCAL RETURNS, THE SOCIALISTS SEEM TO BE PROFITING BOTH FROM THEIR CURRENT ROLE AS AN OPPOSITION PARTY AS WELL FROM PROSPECTS THAT THEY MIGHT SOON RESUME A GOVERNMENT ROLE AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL. VOLPE

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